

large or how small their populations, in dealing with the challenges that we face internationally.

But I will say I have a particular interest in the world's oldest republic because I am privileged to represent its namesake, the City of San Marino, California.

I had the privilege, Mr. Speaker, of leading the first bipartisan delegation to what, as my friend from New York correctly said, is the oldest republic on the face of the Earth, and we took this delegation back in 2004 to the Republic of San Marino. I had the opportunity to present to the Captains Regent, as was said, the co-heads of their state, of their government, a proclamation passed by the San Marino City Council expressing its greetings and appreciation for the friendship that they share.

San Marino, California, was named at its founding for the republic on the Adriatic Sea and displays in its seal Mount Titano, where the republic was first established. Today, like its namesake, San Marino, California, is known for its beauty. It is home to the Huntington Library and Gardens, one of Southern California's great treasures. But the relationship with the Republic of San Marino reaches far beyond beauty. It's my hope that this resolution will help to make us all more aware of the great bond the United States shares with this small, but very important, country.

The Republic of San Marino, as was said, was founded over 17 centuries ago by those who were fleeing the religious persecution of the Roman Empire. They founded a community based on liberty and tolerance 1,300 years before the Pilgrims would land on Plymouth Rock on a similar endeavor. Since those early days of the republic, San Marino has continued its strong tradition of democracy and freedom.

Our close bond, based on a shared commitment to these principles, was first, as my friend from New York said, recorded in history through an exchange of letters between President Lincoln and the Captains Regent. President Lincoln expressed in that letter his deep respect for the Republic of San Marino, saying, "as one of the most honored in all of world history." Mr. Speaker, he took encouragement from its example that any "government founded on republican principles is capable of being so administered as to be secure and enduring." Those are the words of President Lincoln. Now, as our Nation faced a great crisis, Lincoln looked to the example of San Marino, which had endured for so long while standing with its small "r" republican foundation.

As the United States has faced new crises in the 20th and 21st centuries, it has again relied upon San Marino for its steadfast support within international institutions such as the United Nations. San Marino has been a close collaborator on a number of critical issues like combating international terrorist financing. This year

we have honored their friendship and support, as was said, by elevating our relationship to the ambassadorial level.

My good friend and fellow Californian Ron Spogli, as the first U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of San Marino, presented his credentials to the Captains Regent in a ceremony in San Marino's Palazzo Publico on March 8 of 2007. And as my friend from New York said, the exchange was completed when on July 25 of this year, Paolo Rondelli, the first Ambassador of the Republic of San Marino to the United States, presented his credentials to President Bush at the White House.

Mr. Speaker, today we honor this exchange of ambassadors, and we honor the close relationship between our Nation and the world's oldest republic and the fundamental values that bind us.

And, again, I thank my colleagues for their support of this resolution.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of Congressman DREIER's resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 236, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

CONGRATULATING THE PEOPLE OF ETHIOPIA ON ETHIOPIA'S SECOND MILLENNIUM

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 550) congratulating the people of Ethiopia on the second millennium of Ethiopia, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 550

Whereas Ethiopia is a proud country with a long, rich history;

Whereas the earliest known hominid, internationally known as Lucy and classified as the *Australopithecus Afarensis*, was found in Ethiopia;

Whereas in the 9th century, Ethiopians discovered coffee beans in what is now known as the Kaffa region;

Whereas Lalibela, a group of 11 medieval monolithic rock-hewn churches, was constructed in the 13th-century during the Zagwe Dynasty;

Whereas in 1978, Lalibela was recognized on the World Heritage List as a property considered to have outstanding universal cultural value by the World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO);

Whereas in the mid-19th century, Emperor Tewodros II began the modernization of Ethiopia and led a successful campaign to unify Ethiopia;

Whereas the proud and courageous people of Ethiopia defeated the invading Italian army in the Battle of Adowa in 1896;

Whereas United States-Ethiopian relations were established on December 27, 1903, by Emperor Menelik II and President Theodore Roosevelt;

Whereas since then, the Ethiopian-American community has grown to become the second largest African immigrant group in the United States;

Whereas in 1908, European colonial powers recognized Ethiopia's borders and sovereignty;

Whereas in 1923, Ethiopia officially banned the slave trade;

Whereas in 1923, Ethiopia joined the League of Nations;

Whereas Ethiopia is the only country in Africa that was never colonized, with the exception of the 6 years of occupation by the Fascist government of Italy;

Whereas Ethiopia played an important role in the struggle for freedom for many African countries during the colonial period;

Whereas in 1930, Ras Tafari Makonnen was crowned as Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia;

Whereas Emperor Haile Selassie modernized Ethiopia, kept the country united, and largely peaceful;

Whereas in 1974, Emperor Haile Selassie was ousted from power through a military coup by the Derg junta and Lt. Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam was installed as Head of State;

Whereas in May 1991, the brutal Mengistu dictatorship came to an end after a 17-year reign of terror;

Whereas Ethiopia was a founding member of the United Nations and one of the original drafters of the Security Council Charter;

Whereas Ethiopia played a pivotal role in creating the Organization of Africa Union (OAU), which was founded on May 25, 1963;

Whereas Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, became the headquarters of the OAU and remains the headquarters of its successor, the African Union; and

Whereas the 8th African Union Summit, held from January 29-30, 2007, officially declared the second Ethiopian millennium as the second African millennium: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) congratulates the people of Ethiopia on the second millennium of Ethiopia;

(2) recognizes the long, rich history of Ethiopia;

(3) commends Ethiopia's contribution to peace and stability on the African continent through the role it played in the creation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU);

(4) recognizes the longstanding relationship between Ethiopia and the United States;

(5) commends the organizers of the second millennium celebration in Ethiopia and the United States; and

(6) commends the peaceful and jubilant celebration of the second millennium of Ethiopia.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in strong support of this resolution.

I first want to thank the gentleman from California, our colleague Mr. HONDA, for this resolution congratulating the Ethiopian people for their nation's second millennium. I also commend America's large Ethiopian community, the Committee for the Celebration of the Ethiopian Millennium, and Ambassador Samuel Assefa and his staff for making the celebration in Washington, D.C. a truly memorable event. That celebration brought together the finest Ethiopian artists, musicians, scientists, and scholars from around the world for the purpose of making the event not just a social festival but also a learning experience.

Mr. Speaker, Ethiopia is one of the most fascinating countries in the world. It is a country of great antiquity with a culture and tradition dating back thousands of years. The most recent humanoid remains yet discovered, known as "Lucy," were found in Ethiopia.

Modern-day Ethiopia is a multiethnic country with some 83 languages spoken, most of which belong to four main language groups. It is a multireligious country where for centuries, Christians, Muslims, and Jews have co-existed.

In a region of the country known as Kaffa, Ethiopians in the ninth century discovered what we now know as coffee. Ethiopians still practice a traditional ceremony around coffee, a significant social event of the day for family and community.

Today Ethiopia is an emerging democracy, a leader on the continent of Africa, and a friend to the United States. Ethiopia stood by the American people on September 11 and has continued to cooperate with the U.S. Government and the world community in the fight against terrorism.

I wish to express our gratitude and to extend our best wishes to the people of Ethiopia as their nation observes the beginning of its third millennium.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I am pleased to rise in support of H. Res. 550, which congratulates the people of Ethiopia as they celebrate their second millennium. This commends Ethiopia's contribution to peace and stability on the African continent and

recognizes the longstanding relationship between Ethiopia and the United States.

While much of the world celebrated the dawn of the second millennium in January of 2000, Ethiopia recognizes the Coptic calendar, which falls 7 years behind our own. This practice is in keeping with Ethiopia's long and rich cultural heritage.

Ethiopia is the only country on the African continent never to have been colonized and, in fact, played an important role in the liberation struggles of numerous other African countries during the colonial period. It continues to play an important role in promoting peace across the continent, both as a major supporter of peacekeeping efforts and the home of the African Union.

Ethiopia has served as a model of religious toleration in the region, a place where Christianity, Judaism, and Islam have co-existed peacefully for centuries. Ethiopia also is home to countless historical artifacts and world heritage sites, including the earliest known hominid, Lucy; and the medieval rock churches of Lalibela, which have been recognized as a wonder of the world. All of these facts have contributed to the strong sense of pride and nationalism that Ethiopians enjoy today.

And while Ethiopia continues to face significant challenges in terms of security and democratic and economic development, this is a country that has served as one of the strongest allies of the United States in the region. The value of our relationship should not be taken lightly.

I was particularly pleased to learn that Prime Minister Meles, Ethiopia's Prime Minister, kicked off the celebrations in September by granting amnesty to thousands of political prisoners, including a number of opposition leaders.

It is my hope that the spirit of rebirth and reconciliation engendered in the celebration will continue to take root as Ethiopia embarks on a second millennium.

So I rise to congratulate our friends in Ethiopia on this joyous occasion, and I urge my colleagues to support this measure.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, we have now concluded six bills that came out of the Foreign Affairs Committee, and I just want to congratulate all the sponsors of the bills and the members of the committee. You can see these bills were all supported with strong bipartisan support. But I want to especially commend the staffs on both sides of the aisle for working very, very hard in getting these bills through.

The very first bill we did was H.R. 1567, which was my bill, the Stop TB Now Act of 2007. And I want to espe-

cially commend my legislative director, Emily Gibbons, who was so responsible for this bill. If it wasn't for her, I don't think this bill would have come to its fruition. She was tenacious and was extraordinarily helpful to me in passing this legislation, and this legislation is clearly also a tribute to her fine work.

So I wanted to mention that, and I wanted to again thank my colleague from Arkansas.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 550, congratulating the people of Ethiopia on the second millennium of Ethiopia, and for other purposes, introduced by my distinguished colleague from California, Representative MICHAEL HONDA. This important legislation recognizes the significant efforts made by the government of Ethiopia to move forward in peace and stability, and it encourages our continued relationship.

Ethiopia is currently on the road to democracy. This is a path that should be paved with civil and political discourse, peaceful transitions of power, and respect for human rights. By necessity, the achievement of a modern democracy requires the implementation of electoral reforms, the separation of powers in the government, and the establishment of a truly independent judiciary. These are the founding principles of our American Republic, and I have seen firsthand the progress on the path to democracy Ethiopia has made since the brutal dictatorship of Mengistu Haile Mariam was brought down in 1991. I strongly believe that the United States should do all it can to support this transition, including bolstering civil society and speaking out when fundamental human rights are violated.

Ethiopia has a long and proud history. It is the cradle of mankind, as illustrated by Lucy, also known as Dinkinesh (Amharic for "you are wonderful"), which is the nearly complete hominid skeleton discovered by archaeologists in the Awash Valley of Ethiopia on November 30, 1974. Lucy is estimated to have lived 3.2 million years ago and has redefined science's understanding of human evolution. I was happy to work with Texas State Senator Rodney Ellis, Ethiopian Ambassador Samuel Assefa, and the Houston Museum of Natural Science to bring Lucy to Houston, which is one of only nine American cities and the only city in Texas to host the exhibit. The bones are currently on display in Houston, and will be until April 2008.

Ethiopia is also the oldest independent nation in Africa, has never been colonized, and is home to the African Union. Despite Ethiopia's rich history, however, recent decades have brought hardship and suffering to Ethiopia's people, through military conflict, natural disasters, and a military dictatorship.

For over a decade in the House of Representatives, and prior to that in the Houston city council, I have been an outspoken and unwavering advocate for the country of Ethiopia and its people, both in Ethiopia and in the diaspora. Following in the legendary footsteps of my predecessor, Mickey Leland, who died attempting to alleviate the starvation faced by Ethiopia's innocent populace, I have been a champion of increasing foreign aid to, political, economic, and social cooperation with, and improving human rights in Ethiopia.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this legislation is extremely important in encouraging the progressive strides of the government of Ethiopia. This legislation not only congratulates the people of Ethiopia on Ethiopia's second millennium and their long and rich history, but also commends Ethiopia's contribution to peace and stability on the African continent through its role in the creation of the Organization of African Unity. It further recognizes the longstanding Ethiopia-U.S. relationship and commends the organizers of the second millennium celebrations both in Ethiopia and the United States.

I strongly urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 550, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

NATIONAL HEROES CREDIT PROTECTION ACT

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 513) to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to enhance the protection of credit ratings of active duty military personnel who are activated for military service, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 513

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "National Heroes Credit Protection Act".

SEC. 2. PROTECTION OF CREDIT RATINGS OF MEMBERS OF THE RESERVE COMPONENTS DEPLOYED IN SUPPORT OF CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Title II of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 521 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"SEC. 208. PROTECTION OF CREDIT RATINGS OF MEMBERS OF RESERVE COMPONENTS DEPLOYED IN SUPPORT OF CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS.

"(a) REQUEST FOR MILITARY SERVICE DEPLOYMENT EXPLANATION.—At any time during or after serving on active duty in support of a contingency operation, an eligible servicemember may request that a consumer reporting agency include a military service deployment explanation with respect to a qualifying account in the file of that servicemember at the consumer reporting agency.

"(b) RESPONSIBILITIES OF CONSUMER REPORTING AGENCIES.—Upon receiving a request from an eligible servicemember under subsection (a), a consumer reporting agency shall—

"(1) include a military service deployment explanation with respect to a qualifying account in the file of that servicemember and provide the military service deployment explanation to each person who requests the

credit score or consumer report of the servicemember;

"(2) develop and maintain procedures for the referral to other such agencies of any military service deployment explanation received by the agency; and

"(3) notify the servicemember in writing that the inclusion of any explanation or notation in the file of the servicemember could potentially negatively affect the credit rating of the servicemember and may not mitigate a low credit score.

"(c) DUTY OF RESELLER TO RECONVEY MILITARY SERVICE DEPLOYMENT EXPLANATION.—A reseller shall include in any report of the reseller on a servicemember any military service deployment explanation placed in the file of that servicemember by another consumer reporting agency pursuant to this section.

"(d) ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF MILITARY SERVICE DEPLOYMENT EXPLANATION.—Any prospective user of a consumer credit report containing a military service deployment explanation shall acknowledge such military service deployment explanation.

"(e) DEFINITIONS.—For the purposes of this section:

"(1) The term 'eligible servicemember' means a member of a reserve component who serves on active duty outside the continental United States in support of a contingency operation under a call or order specifying a period of such service of not less than 180 days (or who enters such service under a call or order specifying a period of 180 days or less and who, without a break in service, receives orders extending the period of such service to a period of not less than 180 days).

"(2) The term 'military service deployment explanation' means a code generated by a consumer reporting agency that is delivered in conjunction with a consumer report or credit score to a user of the consumer report or credit score to indicate that the consumer report or credit score of the consumer was adversely affected during a period in which the consumer was a servicemember serving on active duty outside the continental United States in support of a contingency operation.

"(3) The term 'contingency operation' has the meaning given that term under section 101(a)(13) of title 10, United States Code.

"(4) The term 'active duty' has the meaning given that term under section 101(d)(1) of title 10, United States Code.

"(5) The term 'consumer reporting agency' has the meaning given that term under section 603 of the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

"(6) The term 'reseller' has the meaning given that term under section 603 of the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

"(7) The term 'qualifying account' means an account that was opened by a servicemember before the date on which the servicemember was deployed outside the continental United States in support of a contingency operation, but only with respect to obligations incurred before such date."

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents in section 1(b) of such Act is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 207 the following new item:

"Sec. 208. Protection of credit ratings of certain servicemembers."

(c) MILITARY SERVICE DEPLOYMENT EXPLANATION NOT TO AFFECT CERTAIN FUTURE TRANSACTIONS.—Section 108 of such Act (50 U.S.C. App. 518) is amended in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by inserting after "liability of that servicemember" the following: ", or the inclusion of a military service deployment explanation in a file of the servicemember at a consumer reporting agency pursuant to section 208."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from

California (Mr. FILNER) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

As we approach Veterans Day in another week, it is important that we, as Members of the House, not just give our speeches and ride in the parades on Veterans Day but we actually do things that will help our veterans, say thank you for their service, and make sure they get the benefits that are due them when they return home, and that they also avoid pitfalls that come about because they are serving their Nation abroad. There are many examples of this, and we are going to correct a few today.

The first and most important, I think, is to assure that when our service men and women are abroad, when they are in active duty, that they do not face credit problems as a result of that duty if they miss some payments on bills back home. Our colleague, Mr. BRADY from Philadelphia, chairman also of our House Administration Committee, has looked at this problem and has come up with a solution.

Mr. Speaker. I rise in strong support of H.R. 513, as amended.

I would like to thank my distinguished colleague, Congressman ROBERT BRADY of Pennsylvania, for crafting this important bill to help protect our Nations veterans. I'd also like to thank the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Chairwoman, STEPHANIE HERSETH SANDLIN, and Ranking Member JOHN BOOZMAN for the strong bipartisan leadership they demonstrated in working on this legislation.

When called to duty, servicemembers across our Nation leave their loved ones, school, and work behind.

Unfortunately as we are witnessing today, some of these servicemembers are returning to letters of delinquency from credit lenders and credit bureaus due to their extended military service abroad.

Mr. Speaker, we must honor our servicemembers' sacrifice by providing them with the resources and financial security needed to protect what they have left behind, so that they may have the peace of mind that their financial interests are protected while serving our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, a credit score impacts all aspects of your life. It represents you as a consumer and indicates to the potential lender if you are trustworthy of repaying your debt. It also determines whether you will qualify for a good interest for a home loan, buying a car, or even school loans.

H.R. 513, as amended, would protect these men and women while they are at war, by providing an explanation in their credit report. This explanation would be generated by a consumer reporting agency, and delivered in conjunction with a consumer report or credit score.

It will indicate in the consumer report, or credit score, that the consumer was adversely affected during a period in which the servicemember was on active duty outside the continental United States in support of a contingency operation.